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QUOTE OF NOTE:

"You realize homelessness is a symptom of this fragmented health and social safety net. ... It's the failure of a system to actually come together to solve a problem."

— Roseanne Haggerty

See story page 14

ON THE COVER

Stefanie Marco of KINDSPiN DESiGN submitted this photo of Flynn riding the waves at Watch Hill. This photo won our contest for best summer vacation photo and story to earn its place on page 1.

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Town Manager Matt Hart's days are already a flurry of activity as he settles into his new job. Pictured here, Hart took a late Friday afternoon call to discuss town business.

Hart's in the right place

New town manager has a love for public service

by Abigail Albair
Executive Editor

While living in West Hartford years ago, the town's new manager Matt Hart got hooked on government work.

"My wife and I were living in West Hartford after we graduated – we were living over on Highland in one of those great, big apartment buildings – and after work I would cycle around neighborhoods," Hart recalled on a recent Tuesday afternoon, glancing out the window of his new office in Town Hall. "I was a runner at that time, too, exploring the neighborhoods, and I was just so impressed with the character and infrastructure and how the community was laid out as a suburb. That got me hooked, intrigued, and helped draw me into the work."

At the time, Hart had intern experience in the town of Windsor under West Hartford resident Al Ilg, who he called a "great, veteran manager."

"He was an ambassador for the field and got me working on a variety of assignments," Hart said of those early days in government management. "It's really all about making a community a better place to work in, to live in and to play in. That really grabbed me and I decided that's what I wanted to pursue, so, to the extent I could, I tailored my law school and master's in public affairs curriculum around local government."

Although today it seems like the perfect fit, Hart said his life in public service came about as a "bit of an accident." A native of Western Connecticut, Hart grew up "not knowing anything about local government, and, unfortunately, I think that's true for many," he said.

After his parents' divorce, Hart, the oldest of four siblings, lived with his mother for several years and then moved to live with his father in Woodbury. He attended The Taft School, a private school in Watertown, as a day student.

"Taft was a tremendous experience – I was introduced to art, the humanities, science, and other disciplines," Hart said. "I grew as a person and became more confident. That experience helped motivate me during some difficult years to get back to college to complete my education."

He was accepted to Tulane University in New Orleans – the first in his family to go to college – but due to family and financial struggles, his education was put on hold after his freshman year.

"I worked a variety of trade jobs for a few years," he said. "I was a tree worker, I painted houses, I did home energy audits, but I knew I wanted to get back to college, so I joined the Army for the Army College Fund."

From 1987 to 1990 he served in the 10th Mountain Division of the U.S. Army at Fort Drum, New York. For the following four years, he served in the U.S. Army National Guard in New York and Connecticut.

"While I was on active duty sta-

tioned in Watertown, NY, toward the end of my enlistment, I was researching schools up there and enrolled at SUNY [State University of New York] Potsdam," he said.

"It's well known for producing New York state music teachers, which I am not," he said, chuckling.

By the time he was back in school, Hart was a 25-year-old sophomore – a bit of a non-traditional student, he acknowledges – but he took summer courses and completed his Bachelor's degree in political science and history in a few years.

"I was interested in law, I was interested in academics and some sort of government service," Hart recalled, but after graduation he first came home and worked for his father's tool and dye machine shop in Oxford for a year.

"Then, I applied pretty much exclusively to programs and schools that had a dual degree program in law with a master's or PhD and got into UConn," he said.

In his first year of that program, the focus was law school, but the second year was when his future path illuminated. It was January 1995 when he took that fateful internship in Windsor.

"I had just started dating my wife around that time, too, so it was a great time for me," he noted with a smile.

The couple was married in 1996. They studied for and took their bar exams together and enjoyed the early time of their marriage in a small apartment in Hartford, and then in West Hartford, while Hart worked as assistant to the town manager in Windsor from 1997 to 2000.

When Hart took a job as assistant to the town manager in Mansfield, the couple bought their first home in that town. Hart went on to be promoted to assistant town manager and, ultimately, to town manager there.

"What I really like is working with people, being a part of a team of folks serving a community," he said. "That's kind of the essence of public service for me. I really enjoy that and thus far I've been pretty

impressed with our team here [in West Hartford.]"

Accomplishments and challenges

During his tenure as town manager in Mansfield, Hart negotiated the development agreement for Storrs Center, funding \$30 million in public infrastructure without issuing any financial debt. He negotiated a water supply agreement with the Connecticut Water Company to remediate environmental conditions and meet projected development demands for the town and University of Connecticut.

He also maintained a current services budget through the recession with property tax increases of 1 mill or less, developed a long-term plan to restore fund balance in the town's general fund, strengthened the town's bond rating, established a sustainability advisory committee, and invested in solar arrays and gas-fired cogeneration plants for municipal and school facilities.

He developed the town's first comprehensive strategic plan and

community vision, and created a safety and wellness committee that related programs for municipal and school employees.

For many years, Hart rode the wave of changing times, an economic crash, weather disasters and other challenges.

A high point for him was when the development agreement for the Storrs Center project was approved.

"It took a lot to get it over the goal line, so that was a great feeling when the council endorsed it and voted in favor," he said.

Of course, with the highs came lows, such as the early days of the recession. "We had to look at reductions in force and the potential for staff layoffs," he said. "That was pretty difficult."

When times were tough, he took solace in the strength a community provides to its members. When Hurricane Irene devastated the Mansfield area, town departments and volunteers pulled together to help those in need.

If tragedy strikes, he said, "the silver lining is how a community

"What I really like is working with people, being a part of a team of folks serving a community. That's kind of the essence of public service for me. I really enjoy that and thus far I've been pretty impressed with our team here."

-Matt Hart



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comes together.”

Hart took up the helm of the West Hartford community at the end of July from Ron Van Winkle, who served 30 years in town, including as town manager since 2008. Hart was one of 25 candidates from 13 states to apply for the job, and Mayor Shari Cantor said when he was hired that his diverse background and his forward-thinking style separated him from the pack.

“In a career that spans 20 years, Matt has shown that he is bright, hardworking, collaborative, ethical, and truly adept at managing both people and finances,” Cantor said.

Leading the town forward

Hart said his priorities going forward are to maintain the services the community has come to enjoy, while tackling the issue of affordability.

“That’s something I want to address and take on,” he said. “I really want to be able to provide the residents and the taxpayers with a great return on their investment. The town certainly has had some remarkable things happen in the last 20 years, and I think the community is well

known, appropriately so, throughout the region and the country. I think it’s important for the municipal organization to work closely with the business community to continue to promote us as a great place to do business and to start a new venture.”

Business retention should also be a focus, he said, as “too often communities focus on recruitment and who they can bring in as opposed to keeping existing businesses [in town].”

The future of the UConn property on Trout Brook Road and Asylum Avenue, transit-oriented development opportunities in the New Park Avenue corridor and redevelopment opportunities in the Center are all things he says are on tap for the coming months.

“We need to make sure all of this is compatible with the community,” he said.

With the current fiscal crisis in Connecticut, and addressing the potential loss of state revenue, “the challenges are significant,” he noted, so when it comes to town expenditures, “we’ve got to take a hard look at ways to economize.”

As the town looks to continue to attract millennials and provide transit options such as cycling and rail to do so, it needs to be “a place where we’re not afraid to innovate,” he said.

“We need to be not afraid to take a risk, not afraid to fail now and then,” he said.

Ultimately growth and success must be sustainable, he said, “as we work to make sure that our community and our region remains a great place to live, a safe place to live, and an affordable place to live for our children and our grandkids, too.”

Citing personal heroes such as Martin Luther King Jr., Abraham Lincoln and Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Hart said he hopes his own legacy is about being a great father and spouse.

Connections with others are important to him, as those famous people he noted as influencers in his life all have “the ability to lead in challenging times and the ability to connect with people through humility.”

Hart is an active member of the International City Management Association as a member of its sustainability communities advisory

committee. He will be joining the ICMA Board of Directors in October for a three-year term. He is a past president of the Connecticut Town and City Management Association and a member of the League of Women in Government.

When not at work, Hart enjoys being outdoors: hiking, riding his bike, canoeing and fly fishing, and spending time with his wife, Kara, an attorney specializing in immigration law with Greater Hartford Legal Aide, and his daughters, Sophie, 13, and Claire, 10.

Had he never found his love of government services, he muses that perhaps he would have been a history teacher or park ranger, but he enjoys his chosen field and it is never far from his mind as he explores West Hartford neighborhoods while walking his mini goldendoodle, Molly, after work, just as he did 20 years ago when he first lived in town.

He’s settling in, not just as town manager of West Hartford, but as a resident, and he’s reveling in the life so far. “I love good coffee, good pizza and good craft beer, and there’s a lot of that here,” he said. “This is a great place to live.” **WHL**

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GOAT glory

Players celebrate 10 years of remembering Conard teammate Larry Philippon

by Alicia B. Smith
Associate Editor

When word gets out with a date, the responses start coming in. Those who had played lacrosse at Conard High School in the past eagerly await the news that Team GOAT is assembling for its annual tournament play. Those who make the trek back to town say they would not miss it for anything.

"The tournament teams come from all over: Simsbury, Cape Cod, New York," Brendan Frobeld said.

This summer the group gathered once again as it has for the past 10 years. Former players return to honor their teammate Larry Philippon – or Goat as he was known.

Philippon graduated from Conard High in 2001 where he played hockey and lacrosse. Following the events of 9/11, he joined the U.S. Marines. Lance Corporal Lawrence Philippon was killed in action in Iraq on May 8, 2005.

"He was the most fierce competitor on the field," Frobeld said of his teammate. "He was just one of those guys that pre-game and post-game, he was just the life of the locker room, the life of the bus trips, just an absolute character and free spirit."

"When it came to his time on the field, he was an absolute fierce competitor," Frobeld reiterated. "The joke was he turned on and off like a light bulb. When he heard the whistle, he was all business."

Years ago, Frobeld and some of his teammates began to brainstorm about putting together an alumni team because so many former players who loved the game lived in the area, and many had continued to play the sport in college. The thought turned to finding a way to make it a bigger event than just people getting together to play lacrosse.



G*O*A*T
LCPL. LAWRENCE PHILIPPON

Frobeld said it soon was decided to honor Philippon and to reach out to his parents, Leesa and Ray, as the team came together.

Frobeld began by contacting those who knew Philippon. At the time Team GOAT was founded this included former teammates of Philippon as well as those who came after him. Frobeld said the team began as a way to memorialize the special person in their life and it grew from there.

"It grew into a way of getting together annually and memorializing him and passing on his legacy," Frobeld said. "We are playing a game he loved, playing for camaraderie and the spirit of the game, the team sacrifice and pride."

Frobeld said the first team began with 25 players and through the years had as many as 55. This year about 40 returned to play in the Glastonbury Lacrosse Tournament held the weekend of July 22-23.

The teams consists of former players, many Team GOAT used to play against during their time on the team at Conard.

"There is a lot of friendly fire going on," Frobeld said, adding that many of the players remember one



Team GOAT was founded 10 years ago, and this photo from its first year depicts the admiration fellow teammates had for Larry Philippon.

another from their days as rivals, and consist of former players from Glastonbury and Simsbury.

Frobeld said now everyone is friendly with one another, both on and off the field.

Team GOAT – which was not only Philippon's nickname but stands for Greatest Of All Time – has had some success. They were runners up in 2008, and won the championship in 2010 and 2013.

The tournament, played at Glastonbury High School, benefits the National Multiple Sclerosis Society, Glastonbury Youth Lacrosse Club and Friends of Glastonbury Lacrosse.

as a family, we play as a group. It is surely not about wins and losses with our team."

During tournament weekend Frobeld said the team of alumni gather for dinner the night before. This year there was a special dinner recognizing the 10th anniversary. The Philippons handed out dog tags to team members with their son's information on one side and his photo on the other. During play the team wore Philippon's old number from his days at Conard.

West Hartford-based Keating Insurance covers the cost of dues for the team and helps to purchase uniforms.

"We are playing a game he loved, playing for camaraderie and the spirit of the game, the team sacrifice and pride."

– Brendan Frobeld

"Immediately, within a couple of years of its existence, it had doubled in size and the fans had doubled in size and year after year we have more people coming out and ordering jerseys," Frobeld said.

The event, he said, has become more like a family reunion, and former lacrosse team members have joined.

"The message of who Larry was is not lost amongst the players, whether they knew him or not," Frobeld said. "Your ability does not matter, your level of play, we are in it

Owner Michael Keating is a neighbor of the Philippons and remembers Larry as being a good influence on his children. He and Ray Philippon became good friends.

Keating, who also played lacrosse at Conard in the 1970s, remembers supporting Philippon when he enlisted in the Marines, and his efforts to get out of honor guard duty and go to Iraq.

The weekend before Philippon died, Keating said he met Ray Philippon at a lacrosse game and the father said he did not have a



Team GOAT is made up of former Conard Hall High School lacrosse team members and gets a ton of support from friends and family.

good feeling about his son. Keating received a phone call shortly after from Ray Philippon explaining what had happened.

Keating is not surprised Team GOAT has continued for as long as it has, "because character counts." As long as the Philippon family is comfortable with the team, Keating said it will continue.

Former Conard lacrosse coach Bill Condon, who coached for 24 years, supports Team GOAT and its efforts.

"Larry, he was a great teammate, a kid that was always upbeat, had a sense of humor and was just a positive member of the team," Condon recalled. "But also, at the same time, was extremely competitive. When things got to crunch time, Larry wanted to win as much as anyone."

It makes sense, he said, that members of the 2001 lacrosse team have taken charge of organizing this sports tradition.

"The Class of 2001 was a

tight-knit group of players," Condon said. "The lacrosse, hockey and football players, it kind of evolved naturally from that, also the closeness with Ray and Leesa. It was a great idea. It's been special to continue this and build it throughout the 10 years it's been happening."

Condon is among those who mark the calendar each year when he learns the tournament's dates, missing only two years due to scheduling conflicts.

"It's unique because it's all Conard people. It's very special," he said.

By now, Frobel said, the event operates as a well-oiled machine and there is never a lack of people who want to play or come out and watch. Those who cannot be there in person support the team by ordering jerseys.

"If I was trying to tell Larry what we are trying to do, the first thing he'd say is, 'It's not about wins and losses, but we are going to win.' He'd immediately want to be a part of the team and the family aspect of it," Frobel said. **WHL**

Team GOAT has had some success, coming in as runners up in 2008 and winning the tournament in 2010 and 2013.



Courtesy photos



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Rudy Brambila and Noe Ruelas were friends growing up in Unión de Tula in the Sierra de Amula region of the state of Jalisco in central-western Mexico. Now they're living their dream here, serving tacos and tequila to customers at Ocho Cafe in Bishops Corner.

"We've been friends for a long time. Our wives are also friends for a long time," Ruelas said.

The two partners, along with two of Brambila's brothers, opened the restaurant in early June with the intent of treating customers like friends and family.

"They're not our customers. They're our friends," Ruelas said. "You don't come to Ocho Cafe and find your waiter and find your bartender, find your manager. You come to Ocho Cafe, you're going to find friends."

"You come here, you're not my customer, you're my friend, you're my family," Brambila said.

He likes that it's about feeding good food to people you like. He's serving them from family recipes and the recipes of friends. All are special. The fresh-made salsa, guacamole, tacos and other foods are just like you'd get in Mexico, sometimes with a twist or something extra, Brambila said.

Based on sales, tacos are the most popular food – there are 11 options. Fajitas are a runner up,

Ruelas said.

The menu also includes salads, enchiladas, quesadillas, and favorites such as chimichanga and carne asada.

Both agreed that flavor and presentation were equally important.

Along with the food, the decor will transport customers to Mexico.

"When you come in you get the feeling like you're somewhere in Mexico," Ruelas said, explaining, "Everything you see here, we brought it from Mexico. Everything is hand crafted, mostly from Tonalá."

Authenticity was important.

Brambila said the four brothers have been in business since he was a child.

"We started in Seattle, Washington," he said. After that they opened restaurants in Charlotte, North Carolina; New York; Connecticut and Massachusetts. Eight in all. No two are the same.

In 1994, Brambila recalled his brother and a partner at the time came east from Seattle to choose a restaurant location.

"They actually came and had a dinner here when it was Bertucci's, 20 something years now, but they ended up doing business in North Carolina, Charlotte," Brambila said.

When they found out the property was available, he said his brother remembered there was something special about the location and there was a sushi place across the street; they decided to go forward.

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Brambila was the youngest and started off working as a bus boy, a dishwasher and a waiter. Working restaurants is the only kind of work he's done.

After working in restaurants for many years, he said he wanted to open his own.

It had been a dream for a long time, Ruelas said, calling opening day "this dream coming true."

"We've had a big passion for a restaurant since we started working in restaurants," he said. "You love it or you hate it, so when you love it, it's easy to do this job."

You're always striving for perfection, he said. **WHL**



Rudy Brambila and Noe Ruelas answered some questions offering more insight on their personality and know-how.

Q: What's your "secret weapon" ingredient?

A: Passion. The passion for food and loving what you're doing – I think that's the best ingredient. (Brambila)

Q: What's your least favorite food?

A: Fast food (both agreed)

Q: What is the one cooking technique that every home chef should know how to do?

A: How to use knives. (Brambila)

A: Timing. If it needs two hours, give it two hours. Not to rush. (Ruelas)

Q: If you could take any celebrity chef out to dinner, who would it be and where would you take them?

A: Robert Irvine from "Restaurant Impossible"

and Mexican chef Aquiles Chavez; I'd take them to Ocho Cafe. (Ruelas)

Q: What is your favorite cookbook?

A: We don't use cookbooks. (Brambila)

Q: If you weren't a chef, what profession would you be?

A: I'd have a ranch in Mexico with cows. (Brambila)

Q: What's your "go to" staple dish?

A: Tacos. As Mexicans, we eat everything wrapped up in a tortilla. (Brambila)

Q: What do you like to cook when having guests to your home?

A: Grilled steak carne asada. (Ruelas)
A: Tamales (Brambila)

Q: It's your last meal on earth. What's on your plate?

A: Fettuccine Alfredo (Brambila)

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'A living poet'

New Poet Laureate Julie Choffel wants to inspire others to creativity

by Alicia B. Smith
Associate Editor



Photo by Alicia B. Smith

When Julie Choffel got to college she had an awakening of sorts.

"In college, I had the realization there were working poets," she said. "There was a culture of it one could participate in."

That was all she needed to know.

Growing up, Choffel wrote poems now and then, something she enjoyed doing for herself.

She began to take her writing more seriously when she realized that there was more to poetry – and more writers of poetry – than the dead poets to whom she had been introduced throughout her education.

"I see poetry and the arts as a big experiment," Choffel said one morning sipping coffee in the center of town.

"It's something where you are looking to being surprised," she continued. "I feel like my work is sometimes narrative, sometimes lyrical. I'm always trying something new. I want to be surprised by it."

Choffel was named the town's sixth poet laureate earlier this summer.

"I was totally surprised," Choffel said of the honor. "It's lovely."

Choffel envisions bringing poetry to town events and hosting poetry readings during her two-year term in the position.

Maria Sassi was the town's first person to hold the volunteer role when it was created in 2005. She served for four years as the town established a job description, which included a succession plan that four

poets laureate would recommend the next person to the post.

That happened for the first time in 2015, when Sassi, along with the town's second, third and fourth poets laureate – Dennis Barone, Jim Finnegan and Ginny Lowe Connors – came together to choose Christine Beck. All five were present at the installation of Choffel in July.

Poets laureate must be West Hartford residents that are active in the community and passionate about promoting poetry. They are expected to inspire public participation in the craft and write original works for special town occasions.

"This has been a very enriching, wonderful experience, not only for me, personally, to get to know our poets laureate, but for our whole community," Mayor Shari Cantor said when Choffel was named to the post.

Choffel came to Connecticut by way of Texas, where she grew up, and California, where she and her husband lived for a short time. They came to the Nutmeg State six years ago when her husband secured a position as a history professor at the University of Connecticut. The couple soon moved their family to West Hartford and have lived here since.

Through the years, her poetry has changed, Choffel said, explaining that many would call her work "experimental poetry."

"Sometimes I think its OK to be confused by art, have questions," she said. "I love poems that have that effect on me and I want to write those kinds of poems."

Choffel said she functions best when she is busy and has her mind on several things at once.

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"I like to have a lot going on. I feel that works better with my practice of writing," she said.

That means Choffel does not write on a daily basis but rather works on her writing when she can.

Finding time to write can be a challenge as a mother of three children – a daughter, 6, and twin boys, 4 – while also teaching creative writing at the University of Connecticut and composition at Tunxis Community College.

"I try to clear a space in my head for what might be there, what might emerge," she said of finding time to write.

Choffel published her first book of poems in 2012, titled "The Hello Delay," a work she finished a few years before she had it published. At the time, Choffel was living in Oakland, California while her husband attended Berkley.

"Living in the Bay Area was such an experience with the density of people," she said. "I was constantly thinking about who all these strangers were to one another. We don't know each other, but have a lot in common."

Choffel is currently working on a new manuscript of poems, which she is in the process of getting published. Like her first book, it has taken her several years to complete.

This next book focuses on her experience moving to Connecticut, as it was here that she settled and became a mother. It has the theme of reorientation of oneself.

"My world was turned upside down in many ways at the same time and I was trying to find myself," she said.

Choffel calls her discovery of living poets an influence in her writing. She was weary of the English Canon and all those "dead poets" that are routinely taught in schools, she said. While she said they should not be dismissed, she wanted to, and hopes others will, explore other writers often not covered.

"As a teacher and writer, I am much more interested in hearing more voices and as many voices as possible," she said.

Choffel has spent time exploring and discovering younger poets, those she feels speak "to what is happening

in the world right now."

As for those who may feel poetry is not accessible to them, Choffel does not agree. Poetry is everywhere and she hopes more and more people will look into the art form or find a creative outlet for themselves.

With so much attention given to science, technology, engineering and math in schools, Choffel said many of her students say they are taking a creative writing class because they never had the opportunity to do so in their other studies.

"I would love to see more space for creative work in people's lives, in American lives," she said. "I think the art of making things is exciting."

Choffel encourages others to spend some time – even five minutes, half an hour or an hour a day – in some kind of creative pursuit. For Choffel, that can even be letting her mind wander when she is out and about, which can sometimes lead her to an idea for a poem.

When she is not busy writing, Choffel said she enjoys spending time with her family, hiking and camping, gardening and volunteering. **WHL**

Child Writing Letters

by Julie Choffel

Or, making lines rove
in space-time, cipher of
shapes we must adhere
to the mind to learn
other things. I dreamed
a tree, under whose light
a woman told me I had the wrong
information. It doesn't happen like
that, she said. Then I was left
again with the usual themes;
faces, some flowers, a shame.
I thought I must remember
what I've learned in this place
lest I be forced to learn it again,
yet. Here I am. Trying to find it.
Holding a pen like a ticket
to the fair, wondering if they'll take it,
let me hitch a ride on the wheel
whose form we escape for
that second of swerve
—suspended
again and again and again.



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Alumni LIFE

Roseanne Haggerty helps communities end homelessness

by Lynn Woike
Editor



Photo courtesy of Rosanne Haggerty

The year after college Rosanne Haggerty spent volunteering at Covenant House, a shelter for runaway and homeless youth in Times Square, opened her eyes to homelessness and launched her life's work.

The years she spent voraciously reading Nancy Drew mysteries, she learned to pay attention to anomalies.

Rosanne Haggerty, president and chief executive officer of Community Solutions.

Something big about homelessness she saw didn't add up: "How can all these well-intentioned people with all these resources be getting such poor results?"

She realized the way the problem was being addressed needed to change and came to the conclusion that focusing on housing was the only sensible response.

For six years she worked at Brooklyn Catholic Charities; while getting her master's degree she developed a number of housing projects for seniors and low-income families, and individuals who were homeless.

voice strong with determination.

The Hall High graduate was 29 when her proposal for the Times Square Hotel on 8th Avenue and 3rd Street was accepted. The property was in bankruptcy. About 200 elderly and mentally ill individuals were marooned there as it was about to be condemned because of code violations.

"It was the time when Times Square itself was the grim place you remember, a symbol of urban blight. It was in the midst of a real estate market downturn so there really weren't good proposals for the building," Haggerty said. "I was like, I have nothing to lose."

"We learned basically that, in a sentence, housing is not just a product, it's a process."

-Roseanne Haggerty

When it was clear providing homes was not enough to solve the problem, she created her first nonprofit – Common Ground Community – and was one of supportive housing's pioneers.

"It's a very simple idea – just combine affordable rents with a well-managed building that links into the health and the mental health and employment support that individuals need to get back on their feet," she said in a telephone interview, her soft

Her vision was to treat the single building as a town, creating small apartments in a well-managed building while also providing case management and community assistance to help residents thrive on their own again.

"It was, I think, the simplicity of the plan and the fact that it just made sense" that made it successful, she said.

About half of the 652 apartments were for individuals coming from

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The Swift & Sons gold-leaf factory on Love Lane in Hartford (below) has been vacant for more than a decade. The rendering (left) shows its future as the Swift Community Food and Business Development Center.

homelessness, and the other half were dedicated to low-income wage earners and those who had a tie to the Times Square business community such as actors and hotel workers.

"I was fortunate to connect with some great organizations and hire a great team and we learned a lot while doing that and went on to build or acquire and renovate buildings to create another 3,000 or so apartments for people coming from homelessness or low-wage workers."

Most of the buildings were in New York City, but there was the Hollander building in downtown Hartford and Cedarwoods in Willimantic.

"A couple of years after the Time Square building was finished, I realized that I was seeing many of the same people living on the street

in Times Square who'd lived on the street before the building opened," she said. "This wasn't supposed to happen. Everything was going to magically right itself. You build the housing and they will come. Right?"

Again, it wasn't adding up. Rather than continuing to build homes for the homeless, she delved deeper to try to understand the forces that drove people into homelessness and trapped them there.

"It struck me that there is this missing link, and that led to our starting a second generation of



Photos courtesy of Rosanne Haggerty

our work, which evolved into Community Solutions," she said.

The nonprofit is based in New

York City with offices in Hartford, Washington D.C. and Los Angeles. It works to end homelessness and the conditions that create it by getting to know homeless individuals on a first-name basis and learning what they needed. In doing that, she said she realized that what was broken was not the individuals but the system.

"We learned basically that, in a sentence, housing is not just a product, it's a process," Haggerty said.

She learned that many of the people had a lot of contact with not-for-profit and public agencies before they became homeless.

"So interestingly, their crises were not coming out of the blue, but the groups they were interacting with didn't have the tools to help them," she said.

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This old postcard shows how the factory once looked.

Agencies would offer what they happened to have available: a meal, transitional shelter, an outreach program. That, she said, was like going to the emergency room needing an orthopedic surgeon for a broken leg and the hospital offering the only doctor it had on duty, a dermatologist.

“What we found was that it was nobody’s job in any community to actually solve homelessness and to pull the pieces together.”

That became her work.

“You realize homelessness is a symptom of this fragmented health and social safety net. ... It’s the failure of a system to actually come together to solve a problem.

“To be a chronic homeless person means you’ve been homeless a year or more or have had several different episodes over a couple of years that add up to a year.” Haggerty said.

Ironically, an individual’s behavior was not the barrier to a solution.

“It’s the failure of that community, of all the different actors, to realize that whatever they were doing wasn’t working and to come together to actually assist that person out of homelessness. Once a person ages into homelessness, they really can’t solve the problem on their own. If you’re homeless six

months, the research shows you’re going to be homeless for a long, long period of time. So it’s important for communities to realize ... that if someone is continuing to slide, slide, slide farther into homelessness, that it’s not their behavior that has to change, it’s your behavior as the professional who has a job to do.”

A community’s homelessness situation is a measure of how well it has come together to solve the problem, she said.

“You realize homelessness is a symptom of this fragmented health and social safety net. ... It’s the failure of a system to actually come together to solve a problem.”

–Roseanne Haggerty

The first place she turned with this was to Times Square. The goal was to find a way to end street homeless there within three years. By figuring out what needed to be done differently and organizing resources to better deliver sustainable solutions, the project exceeded its goal, reducing

homelessness 87 percent.

After starting on that journey in 2003, Community Solutions formed in 2011 as an organization separate from the property development and management organization. It now works around the country, and some locations internationally, helping communities build housing systems that will sustainably end chronic homelessness and veteran homelessness.

Her work had evolved from building homes to building operating systems that get people out of homelessness.

It’s easy to fall into the trap of organizing around a mission or service they are funded to provide. Often there’s no match between what is offered and the needs of the person in distress.

“So what our insight was, any one organization might not have the right resource to solve

a person’s problem who’s homeless permanently, but if you pulled a whole collection of organizations together, within that team, you would likely have the resource that was needed. But you needed the group to be working as a team and share the same aim. ... [S]omebody has to organize that, change the thinking and the behavior of the different organizations.”

She’s gotten good at it.

“In the communities that are making enormous progress on the issue, they know by name, in real time, who’s been homeless the longest, who has the most significant medical needs and they know how quickly they can house a person. They know if anyone moving on is back in homelessness. They have like this very granular view of what is happening and whether

they’re putting all their resources together in effective ways.”

Data provides the glue to help groups collaborate, and it’s adding up.

“We’re getting better at housing people quickly and driving the numbers of chronic homelessness and veteran homelessness down,”

she said.

Haggerty has come to realize in the last 10 years she's been thinking about the problem differently that "it's not just an affordable housing problem, but a connectivity problem and that other sectors have actually figured out tools or approaches that help solve a complex problem with a lot of moving parts."

By gathering together all the players in a community and focusing on the goal, those successful methods were shared and barriers were identified.

"Do rules need to be changed? Do resources need to be allocated differently? There are a whole lot of questions communities need to face up to and behaviors that need to be examined," Haggerty said.

The breakthrough came from the work back in Times Square.

"It just required new pathways to be built and we could only learn that by speaking with homeless individuals themselves," she said.

Common Ground created slightly more than 3,000 apartments, helping about 4,500 people out of homelessness or to have affordable housing.

Since launching, Community Solutions has helped communities get 176,000 people housed because they learned what they actually needed to do to end homelessness as opposed to merely providing services.

Out of the 70 communities it's worked with in the United States, 10 have ended either chronic or veteran homelessness and 17 more are set to reach that goal in the next couple of months.

"We're getting to these powerful proof points that this is in fact solving the problem. It's about the quality of the team and the intention of really solving the problem as opposed to just responding to it," Haggerty said.

A different set of activities occur when you're working

toward a clear, sustainable and measurable goal, she explained.

What Haggerty thought was a one-year deal turned into a lifetime commitment.

"I just feel very fortunate to have a way to contribute," she said.

She also said she's more optimistic now than she has been in more than 10 years. A project she is working on in Hartford's North End takes her quest to end homelessness to the next step by addressing what can be done to eliminate the risk factors that contribute it.

The former Swift & Sons gold-leaf manufacturing building and two related historic homes were donated to Community Solutions because the surrounding area has high rates of housing instability, poor quality housing, cases of addiction and unemployment.

"This is where you find the risk factors for homelessness. So this is where we're working," she said.

The \$33 million economic development project will turn the 80,000-square-foot factory and houses into incubator space for food entrepreneurs and a shared business space. Leases have already been signed with a commissary kitchen and an indoor growing facility.

Renovations begin in October and will be completed in early 2019. The project is projected to create 175 jobs and help stabilize the local economy.

"It's a different direction for us, but one that we think is really quite essential to be going upstream from homelessness itself to look at the factors and the places where the risks are the greatest," she said.

Calling the Swift factory her second-most special project after her first in Times Square, Haggerty said, "[It] represents something important and a new direction for us, which is looking at the kinds of investments in communities that will head homelessness off at the pass." **WHL**

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COMMUNITY PUBLICATIONS

News roundup

by **Abigail Albair**
Executive Editor

Governor announces plan to eliminate all education aid

Less than 48 hours after West Hartford sent a letter to the state pleading for the preservation of the town's Education Cost Sharing grant, Gov. Dannel Malloy released a plan to shift all education aid to Alliance Districts – the poorest in the state – and to consequently zero out all funding for West Hartford and 84 other municipalities.

Fifty-four non-alliance towns “with a greater reliance on state funding,” according to a release from the governor's office, will have ECS aid reduced as funding is maintained for the 30 districts with “the highest student needs and the greatest reliance on state funding.”

The state continues to operate without a budget as legislators grapple

with numbers and have thus far been unable to come to an agreement as to how to handle a growing deficit.

Malloy is running the state through executive order, which allows him to reallocate funds, but not to raise new revenue. This latest revision to the Executive Order Resource Allocation Plan also restores \$40 million to private, nonprofit health and human service providers – as previous reductions forced the providers to make “unacceptable cuts in services” – and makes \$60 million in other adjustments “to ensure adequate resources to meet state obligations.”

The plan would take effect in October if the legislature has not adopted a budget by then. The first 25 percent of the ECS payments to the towns slated to receive them would be made in early October.

West Hartford received nearly \$21 million in ECS funding in fiscal year 2017 and, although Malloy's June executive order would have dramatically cut that funding, officials were shocked at the fact that the town would now receive nothing at all.

“The governor's revised executive order is devastating for our community,” Mayor Shari Cantor said. “I am furious and extremely disappointed. This complete elimination of state aid for our 10,000 diverse student population is shocking.”

In a joint letter to Office of Policy and Management Secretary Benjamin Barnes, dated Aug. 16 – a response to a request he sent to all municipalities earlier this month asking for fiscal information – Cantor and Town Manager Matt Hart said, “it is critical that the state's action be guided by the reality rather than the perception of West Hartford.”

“The people of West Hartford cannot ... face a massive reduction in state revenue or cost shift that would significantly spike property taxes and jeopardize the town's role as

Hartford's largest neighbor and an economic anchor for the region,” Hart and Cantor wrote in their response to Barnes. “West Hartford has consistently made tough choices to consolidate administrative functions, implement cost controls, collaborate with other cities and towns, carefully invest its funds, anticipate unfunded liabilities, tax as necessary, promote innovative development, and enhance our responsiveness to an increasingly diverse community. Because we have made these tough choices, West Hartford's economic growth and fiscal stability are major factors in the strength and future of the metropolitan region.”

They note the demographics of the West Hartford public school system, which has a 41.9 percent minority population this year, including 21.4 percent of students whose home language is not English and 21.3 percent of students eligible for free and reduced lunch. Those numbers reflect an increase from a decade ago, when

See **ROUNDUP** on page 27

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FALL Arts

Photo by John Fitts

A lifetime of expression

Syrian artist's work speaks of the human condition

by John Fitts
Assistant Editor

Adeebah Alnemar works on the porch of her family's West Hartford rental. She works exclusively in charcoal, sometimes crushing the material and using a brush to add depth and texture.

Adeebah Alnemar discovered drawing as a child but it was only two years ago that she began using charcoal to transfer her feelings to paper, offering stark images that speak to her family's time as Syrian refugees and, more recently, of creating a new home in the United States.

"Her art shows two different modalities," said family friend and advocate Nancy Latif of West Hartford-based Refugee Advocacy Services. "This is a lot more than two years' experience. This is a lifetime of feeling and expression."

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“While I was in Jordan, I was just in the very foundation of what I’m doing in life. Now that I’m here, all the doors are open to me.”

–Adeebah Alnemar

The images, particularly those made in the Middle East, are often stark, showing humanity’s struggle to break through emotional, physical or mental barriers. Often, though, there is an element of hope.

Alnemar and her husband, Ibrihim Aldabaan from Kuwait, were married in 1999. They made their home in Syria, where Aldabaan opened a business. They started a family and had five children.

Syria had a fair amount of poverty and lacked a true democratic government, but, in many ways, was very progressive, with women holding

positions in business and government, Latif said.

But then came 2011 and the crackdown on anti-government demonstrations was swift and brutal, leading to a civil war complicated by warring sides and international involvement that continues today.

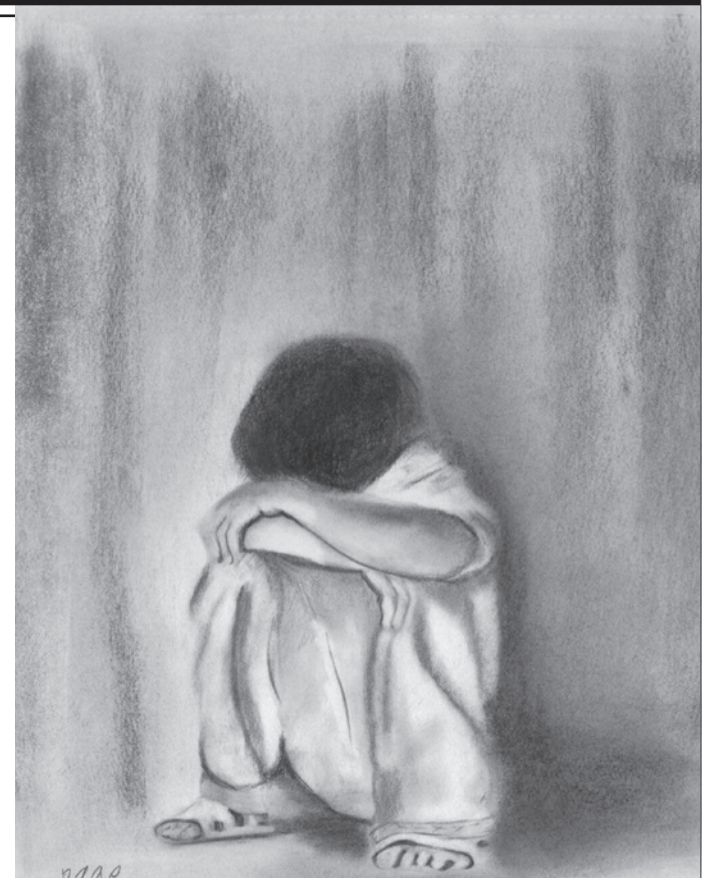
“It was a beautiful country, very productive,” Aldabaan said. “People seemed to be relatively happy. We didn’t have war, we didn’t have ISIS, we didn’t have bombings and stuff like that. Now we have war, we have ISIS and we have no homes.”

In 2011, the family found

itself in the wrong place at the wrong time. They lived in Homs, a hotspot for demonstration, and men were routinely rounded up by the government troops.

“They wanted you to give up names,” Aldabaan said. “Who makes demonstrations? Who’s against the government?”

He was imprisoned for 40 days. He said he was interrogated and whipped. The government wanted information. At one point, with a blindfold and hands behind his back, soldiers forced his thumbprint on a “confession,” a document he knew nothing about.



Adeebah Alnemar’s work speaks to the human condition and her experiences in Syria, Jordan and now the United States.

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FALL Arts

Finally, Alnemar secured his release by going to the courthouse with some family savings, the equivalent of approximately \$1,000, and using the judge's name to claim she had an appointment. She didn't, but managed to get him freed.

But life in the crumbling city was unsafe and men were still being rounded up, often multiple times, so the family went to live with Alnemar's family in Idlib, near the Turkish border.

From there, the family went to Ybroud, a suburb of Damascus, despite a four-hour journey with numerous roadblocks.

"I wanted to go there when I heard there was safety," Aldabaan said.

There he found factory work, but soon more crackdowns started. The government was especially looking for people from Homs.

"He didn't want any part of that. He just wanted to live," Latif said.

At the advice of a friend, the family then went to Jordan. After two days in a camp they rented a house in Amman and registered

with the International Organization for Migration. They underwent numerous intense interviews, with officials making sure their answers were the same and didn't change over time. After more than a year, the family finally heard they could go to America.

"This was something really big for us so we all started dancing and really happy because we had a chance to go to America," Alnemar said.

Aldabaan has a brother in New Haven and one in England. Two brothers and a sister remain in Jordan. His mother and sister had a chance to leave but the mother refused to leave two sons behind.

Another sister, her husband and four children used the money they had saved and sold wedding gifts to travel from Turkey to Greece in a small boat. There they spent some 40 days in a non-sanitary camp only to be returned to Turkey.

Alnemar has sisters in Syria, in the cities of Idleb and Latakia. Both are also looking for long-term stability.

Since they are established here,

Her older work was signed as **Mother of Nage**. She signs her newer pieces under her own name.

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Latif has some hope that other family members can be reunited in the United States.

For their part, Aldabaan and Alnemar came to the United States last November, first living in Manchester for approximately five months before receiving a threatening phone call. The caller said "many bad words," gave their address and said they had 24 hours to leave.

The family ended up in a motel and New Haven-based Integrated Refugee and Immigrant Services found a home for them in that area.

But Aldabaan, with his wife rattled about the call, worried about moving with their children to a high-crime area.

"After that call, I don't need anything to happen with my family," he said.

It was then that Latif helped find a West Hartford rental and the family is moving toward self-sufficiency since Aldabaan has found a good job.

Despite the threatening phone call, the family said their experience in the United States has been very positive overall.

"We don't feel like we are refugees in America," Aldabaan said. "We felt like we were refugees in Jordan. Now that we've come to America, it's like being home."

Our home is America now."

And here they are getting much support. In addition to Latif, Hartford Area Neighbors' Alliance, a group formed by four churches in Simsbury and Granby, and a neighborhood group in West Hartford, have also supported the family.

While in the United States Adeebah has also pursued her art to a much greater degree, working exclusively in charcoal and only selling original work, not reproductions. While she originally signed works as Mother of Nage, after one of her children, she now works under her own name.

Adeebah not only sees her art as expression, but also as a way to support her family.

"I thought if I can draw and sell my drawings, I can contribute to the family," she said.

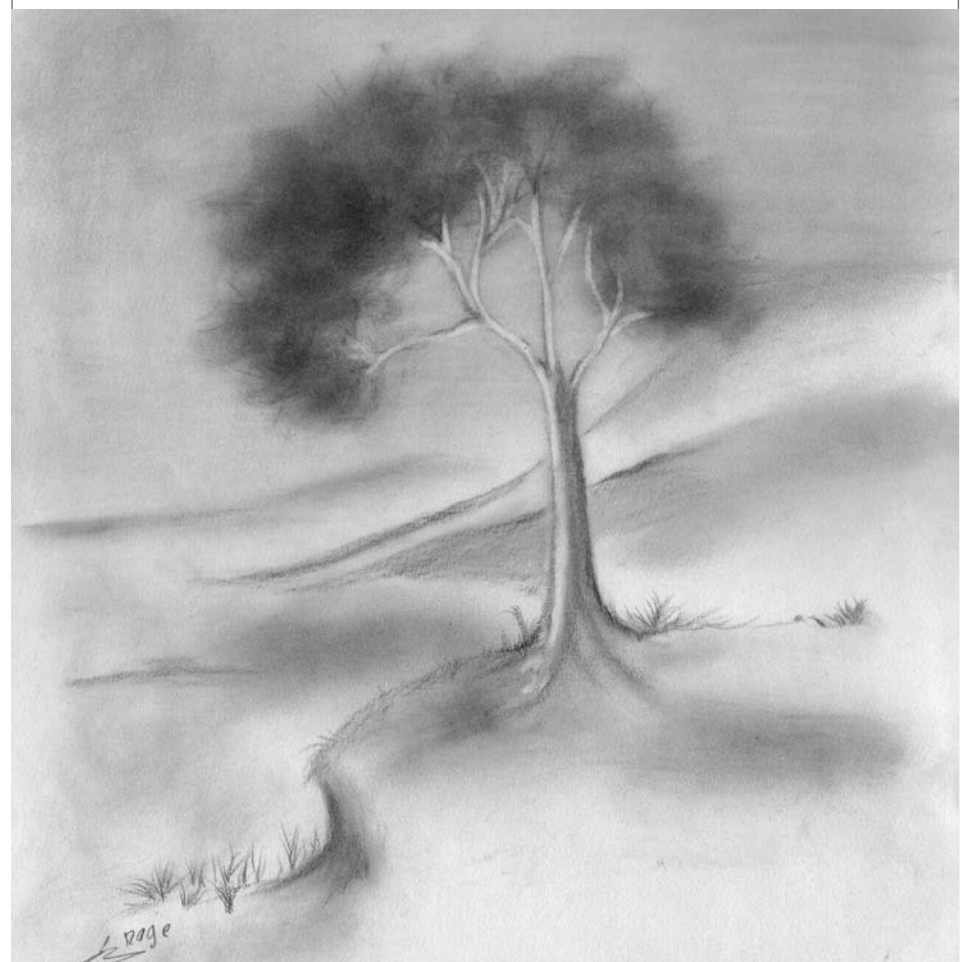
Adeebah said there are so many opportunities in America.

"While I was in Jordan, I was just in the very foundation of what I'm doing in life. Now that I'm here, all the doors are open to me." **WHL**

Some of Adeebah's drawings are on display through September at Tangiers International Market, 550 Farmington Avenue, Hartford. See more at <https://adeebah-alnemar.squarespace.com>.



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COMMUNITY PUBLICATIONS



Lasting legacies

Community mourns loss of longtime educator, public servant and business man

by Mara Dresner, Alicia B. Smith and Abigail Albair

The town of West Hartford experienced several losses in recent weeks, as three people who contributed significantly to its success over the years passed away. Their devotion to the community is remembered as neighbors and friends recall the ways in which they made West Hartford the place it is today.

Nan Glass

West Hartford said goodbye to a “giant” in public service this month.

Former town councilor, town clerk, mayor and dedicated volunteer Nan Glass died August 10 at the age of 88.

“She was such a committed public servant and cared passionately about West Hartford,” Mayor Shari Cantor said.

Former Mayor Scott Slifka – who was elected to the Town Council in

2001, became mayor in 2004 and went on to be the town’s longest serving mayor – said Glass had begun to wind down her service due to a variety of personal reasons as he came on the scene, but she always continued to offer him her support.

“After the time I became mayor, I started hearing from her on a regular basis, usually in unsolicited letters or emails. They were always encouraging, always positive, and I’m proud to say often complimentary,” Slifka recalled. “Even if it was on a relatively small issue, the impact it had on me was significant. I don’t know if Nan realized how impactful her words would be for someone like me.”

Slifka noted that, a person born in the late ’70s or early ’80s – during the height of Glass’ decades of service – may not know much about her, or know her at all.

“That’s sad because this was a person who touched every single

“Her biggest years were some time ago, but I’m just old enough to have developed this sense that Nan was a giant, so when she would reach out to me, it was overwhelming.”

– Scott Slifka

aspect of the community and was extremely trusted,” he said.

Glass took pride in the West Hartford community, even in the last few years when she had relocated to North Carolina.

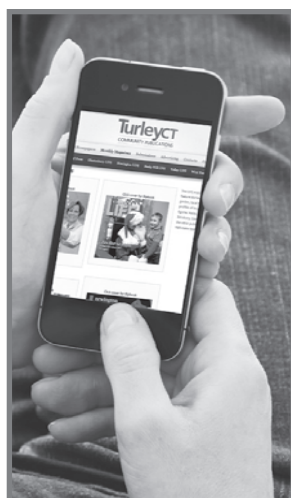
One of her grandchildren told Cantor that, during visits home, if Glass saw a “for sale” sign when driving around town, she would wonder what the reason was for the homeowners move.

“What’s their story? Are they relocating in town? Are they leaving? Why?” Cantor said Glass would ask herself.

“I relate to that very well because

we want our community to be the best it can be, so I also wonder what are those personal stories,” Cantor said.

Born into a large family of Polish-Jewish immigrants, Glass was raised in Hartford and graduated from William H. Hall High School in 1946, according to her obituary. While in high school, she worked as a runner in the editorial office of the Hartford Times. She earned a bachelor’s degree in English literature from the University of Connecticut and worked in the university’s Public Information Office before marrying Harvey Glass



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in 1951 and going on to spend many years as a mother to her four children: Alan, Amy, David and Mitch.

Glass was also a career journalist once her children were older, working first as a reporter for the West Hartford News in 1971 and later as its managing editor, her obituary explains. She was a member of the West Hartford Town Council from 1973 to 1978 and was elected town clerk in 1979. She served four terms before retiring from the post and again running for council. She was elected mayor in 1995 and served a two-year term.

"She had the privilege of serving in positions – and serving extremely well – in which politics may not have been the first way some were introduced to her," Slifka said. "She was a journalist and a town clerk, which although [it's a political position] is viewed as a neutral arbiter, and then she became mayor as capstone of her career.

"Her biggest years were some time ago, but I'm just old enough to have developed this sense that Nan was a giant, so when she would reach out to me, it was overwhelming."

Some remember Glass most prominently for her service in town government, while others remember her community work.

"Nan was one of the finest individuals I've ever met," former Town Manager Barry Feldman said. "She was dedicated and committed to her beloved West Hartford like few others. She was a wise person who always maintained a clear and practical view of issues regardless of their complexity or sensitivity. She will be dearly missed."

Slifka noted that he'd heard several, including Feldman, speak of Glass with "great reverence" over the years, but said, "I'd heard about Nan the politician and Nan the strategist, which I didn't have the pleasure of seeing, but what I did have the gift of seeing was Nan the community steward.

"She never lost her fighting spirit and her feelings as a strong Democrat, but I think she had also transitioned to that point in time as a steward of the community and its history and, quite often, when she'd contact me, it was relative to that; it was putting things in their historical perspective."

Glass was the last female mayor in town before Cantor, and the current mayor takes that legacy seriously.

"She had the respect of everybody that she worked with because she worked hard, because she was always prepared and because she worked in an ethical, moral, respect-

ful way and that has been a real example for me and I think for everybody in government," Cantor said. "I think being a female mayor and having that kind of respect both for your ability to do the job and for the way you do the job has guided me."

Glass helped to create Celebrate! West Hartford, which was held for the 30th time this year. Even after she moved back to Hartford, she remained involved in West Hartford happenings, consulting on the publication of an illustrated history of the town that shares the name of the annual town-wide festival, planning the 150th anniversary of the town's founding, and consulting on the 2006 renovation of the Noah Webster Library.

She was an active volunteer with Loaves and Fishes Ministries in Hartford and the Connecticut Children's Medical Center, as well as other boards and nonprofits, according to her obituary.

Six West Hartford mayors, deputy mayors, two town managers, two town clerks and other town employees were among those in attendance at the funeral for Glass August 14.

"It was clear, her love for her community," Cantor said. "We're sad that she passed but her memory and her legacy will carry on."

Slifka said he hopes Glass knew how important she was to the town of West Hartford.

"Those figures of greatest significance, I realize, they don't think of themselves as giants," he said.

Timothy Confessore

On August 2 the community lost one of their own: a friend, father, husband and businessman, Timothy Confessore. He was born and raised in West Hartford, raised his family here and operated Cricket Press. He passed away following a brief illness.

"His heart and soul was in West Hartford," said Michele Confessore, his wife of 31 years.

"You would not be able to walk down the street and talk to people that didn't have an interaction with him," she said.

Timothy Confessore attended Sedgwick Middle School and graduated from Conard High School. While still in high school he stopped by the Cricket Press, then located on Lasalle Road, looking for a summer job.

The owner, Bill Teasdale, said the only opening he had available was for someone to come in and clean the

office. Timothy Confessore agreed to take on the work.

By 1986 he would own the printing company, now located at 236 Park Road, where he would help organizations throughout the community with all of their printing needs. Teasdale would continue to work for the company for many years.

"They always worked side by side," Confessore said. "They were like family."

When Timothy Confessore was not busy with Cricket Press he was active in his children's lives: his son, Greg, who was active in baseball, and daughter, Cait, who participated in the local arts programs.

"He was very involved and dedicated to any cause that was near and dear to him," Michele Confessore said.

The obituary for Timothy Confessore described him this way: "known for his great sense of humor and generosity, he touched the lives of so many in the community through his business, volunteering, coaching, and friendship, treating all with respect."

It continues, "Tim prided himself on the premise of family first."

Michele said the business has been "running without skipping a beat," since her husband's passing.

"We have a solid plan here at Cricket from a customer standpoint," she said of the future of the business.

"He was 100 percent in the now as evidenced by his community involvement and any interaction the community had with him."

- Michele Confessore

"There is a big hole where Tim is no longer," she said. "We look forward to continuing to serve the community."

Michele met her husband through mutual friends at what at the time was Saint Joseph College. One of the many things she said she will always remember was her husband's dedication to all of his endeavors.

"He was 100 percent in the now as evidenced by his community involvement and any interaction the community had with him," Michele Confessore said. "They knew he could be trusted, that is the mainstay of our business."

Business Operations Manager Dominic Marino has been at Cricket Press for 26 years and, like his colleague, had done with the former owner he asked to join the team in 1991.



Timothy Confessore was the owner of the Cricket Press in town and was devoted to his community.

"I had a five-day trial. Two of the guys said I wouldn't make it, 26 years later and I'm still with the company," Marino said.

One of his reasons for staying was Timothy Confessore.

"Tim was big on order, structure, efficiency, commitment," Marino said. "I think I will miss his sincerity. He's very proud, he made you feel welcome."

"I love my job, I love to go to work," Marino said he heard often

from his boss.

When Timothy Confessore received his diagnosis, he explained to Marino what was happening then decided he did not want to share it with the public, as he did not want his personal issue to interfere in anyway with business.

Just like his father had done, Greg Confessore began working at Cricket Printing with the job of sweeping the floors and emptying the trash.

"He always thought that was kind of cool," Greg Confessore said.

Greg would work at the business during summers and on breaks from school and, more recently, after his father became ill. His dad, however, insisted he should not give up his goal to work in mechanical engineering.

The two men bonded with one another over baseball. Greg said his

dad was never a fan of the game until he started playing it.

The evening before Tim Confessore passed away, he and Greg watched one final ball game together on television.

When Greg was younger, his father would volunteer as an assistant coach on Greg's baseball teams, and would always be in the seats during all but four of his college games.

Cricket Printing sponsored several youth sports teams as well as fall baseball and, at one time, a woman's soccer team.

When Greg was playing youth baseball, the business ended up sponsoring a baseball team across town. The two teams met in a championship game and Tim rooted for his son's team while hoping Team Cricket Printing would do well, too.

Tim Confessore managed to keep an upbeat attitude since being diagnosed in January. His main concern, Greg said, was that he would miss out on the future of his wife and two children. "He was a special person, especially to me," Greg Confessore said. "He really was my best friend."

Robert E. Dunn

On multiple continents Robert E. Dunn made education the centerpiece of his life. Dunn, 89, died July 18 from complications associated with Parkinson's disease and related dementia.

He served on the faculty of West Hartford's William H. Hall High School for 38 years as a history and social studies teacher, department head, guidance counselor, assistant principal and school principal from 1962 until his retirement in 1990. He was awarded Connecticut's Principal of the Year.

"I can describe Bob as a person who always made you feel like you were the most important person in the room. He was a man you were always glad to see. Bob's positive outlook on life is something I will always remember," said John Smeallie, a West Hartford resident who worked as a video specialist based at Hall in the early 1980s and Rotary Club board member. "I remember Bob as a guy who was loved by faculty and students alike."

Dunn was born in Newark, New Jersey, the son of George E. and Ruth B. Dunn, and was raised in

Watertown, Massachusetts and East Hartford, graduating from East Hartford High School. He earned a bachelor's of arts from Bates College in Lewiston, Maine, where he met his wife, Gladys, to whom he was married for 59 years. He earned a master's from the University of Connecticut, and received a Rotary Ambassadorial scholarship, which enabled him to continue his studies at the University of Birmingham in England. While there, he led a European student group to the Rotary Youth Festival in South Africa. After returning to the U.S., he earned his Ph.D. at UConn. He also studied at Harvard University as an Alfred North Whitehead Fellow, at the University of Oregon as a John Hay Fellow, and at Kettering Foundation Institutes at Colorado College, Guilford College and the University of Colorado.

The Rotary Ambassadorial scholarship he received had a deep impact on him. He was a 35-year member of the West Hartford Rotary Club, served on its board of directors, was a recipient of the Rotary Paul Harris award, sponsored a Rotary Club Foundation annual scholarship, and was inducted



Courtesy photo

The Robert E. Dunn Fund at the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving assists deserving Hall High School students who have financial need and who qualify to participate in international and domestic educational experiences beyond high school. Bob Dunn, who died July 18, and his wife, Gladys, are pictured at the Foundation in 2007.

as a charter member of the Arch C. Klumph Society for his contributions to The Rotary Foundation.

"He and his wife, Gladys, decided



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to leave a living legacy to the Rotary Foundation. We came up with an endowed scholarship and that a candidate from West Hartford or East Hartford would be given preference. The person must be studying for their master's degree and they must study in another country, and it must be in a field of one of six areas that Rotary focuses on: disease prevention; maternal and child health, safe water and sanitation, education and literacy, economic development, peace and conflict resolution," Eileen Rau, past district governor for District 7890, explained.

Dunn was also a long-time member of the West Hartford YMCA Committee and chaired the West Hartford School and Community Organization. He served on the board of the American School for the Deaf and the committee for the inaugural Celebrate! West Hartford event. He was a recipient of the Noah Webster Award for service to West Hartford.

"Bob and Gladys Dunn have been incredible stewards of ASD since the time they were introduced to the school in 1986," said Jeff Bravin, ASD

executive director. "Bob was extremely impressed with the education at ASD and wanted to help with student experiences – and he and Gladys did. They helped to fund projects such as Classroom by the Sea; Close-Up, a program where students participate in a weeklong study of key people in government, law, business and media; and other student conferences, workshops and exchanges. ... All of us at the

"Whatever he had to say had meaning and importance. Everybody listened to Bob; there was something of substance whenever he spoke."

–Tony Rodriguez

school will miss Bob Dunn and deeply appreciate his dedication and commitment to ASD's mission of educating deaf and hard-of-hearing students."

Dunn taught graduate courses at Trinity College, the University of Connecticut and the University of Hartford. After retirement, he was deputy headmaster of the Seoul International School in South Korea for five years, where Gladys was director of admissions.

Dunn served as a trustee for Bates College, which presented him with a Distinguished Service Award and an honorary doctorate degree.

With his wife, he represented Greater Hartford on a People to People Program in England. He served as national chairman of the High School Student Council Association. He served on a National Commission chaired by the

U.S. Secretary of Education and was appointed by the U.S. Department of Education to help choose exemplary schools after Hall High School was awarded that honor. He participated in educational study missions and research work in Russia, Eastern Europe, Turkey, Taiwan and England. He and his wife traveled the world during summer breaks with particular interest in learning about international education systems.

His legacy to education continues through the Rotary scholarships and the Robert E. Dunn Fund at the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, which assists deserving Hall High School students who have financial need and who qualify to participate in international and domestic educational experiences beyond high school.

"Since establishing their first fund at the Hartford Foundation in 1993, Bob and Gladys Dunn's quiet generosity has enriched the lives of hundreds of young people in our community through education-related travel, music and international exchange opportunities," said Sally Weisman, director of development, the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving.

Dunn's legacy lives on in smaller ways as well.

"Bob was a very engaging individual," said Tony Rodriguez of Bloomfield, a former president of the West Hartford Rotary. "Bob was never an individual that was out there all the time. He was a reserved individual. When he spoke you listened. Whatever he had to say had meaning and importance. Everybody listened to Bob; there was something of substance whenever he spoke." **WHL**

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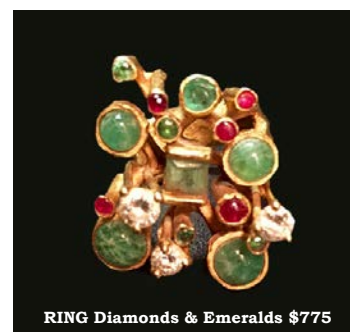
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ROUNDUP from page 18

they were 33.4 percent, 17.6 percent and 15 percent, respectively. In that same time, AP participation saw a 74 percent increase.

Those positive results were achieved, Cantor and Hart explained, at a per pupil cost that is more than \$1,000 less than the statewide average.

Cantor said the town does its best to meet the needs of all students.

"This has become more challenging as students needs have grown," she said. "We are so proud of our success. We receive far less than our share of the ECS formula. We are in the bottom third of the state in per pupil spending yet we are one of the top performing districts in the state and the country. This should not be penalized."

The town has never been given its full due in Education Cost Sharing, dipping as low as 28 percent and coming in at 58 percent of the full allotment in fiscal year 2017, while property taxes have increased from 69.7 percent of the town's revenue in 2008 to 87.1 percent of the town's revenue this year.

Cantor and Hart note than fact that West Hartford is 67th in the state for median household income with 8 percent of residents living below the poverty line and grand list growth is slow, with just a .58 percent increase this fiscal year.

The mayor said she was "disappointed" by the brief amount of time that transpired between when the town delivered its response to OPM and when Malloy released his revised plan. "We spent a week summarizing things that we take very seriously," she said. "It felt like we were completely ignored and nobody that sought the data was listening to our voice."

State Rep. Derek Slap, who represents a portion of West Hartford as well as Avon and Farmington, agreed and called Malloy's plan "outrageous."

"We pay for education and we're not opposed to doing that, but we are not some rich town," Slap said. "This would have a direct impact on property taxes and really undermine our schools."

The plan, he said, does not have the support of the legislature, and his hope is both political sides can come together to find a solution.

He said, "I think its incumbent on all legislators to really come together and put out a solution that's better for all of the students in Connecticut. ... What I'm hoping is that this causes all

legislators to get to the negotiating table with a great sense of urgency."

Candidates nominated for fall election

Mayor Shari Cantor told fellow Democrats at the town committee's nominating convention July 18 that now, more than ever, people need the party's leadership.

She and four of the Democratic incumbents on the Town Council, including Deputy Mayor Leon Davidoff, Beth Kerrigan, Ben Wenograd and Dallas Dodge, were nominated to seek another term. Liam Sweeney was nominated to seek the seat currently held by Judy Casperson, who decided not to run for re-election.

Current Board of Education member Cheryl Greenberg was nominated to run for another term, while newcomers Deb Polun and Lorna Thomas-Farquharson were nominated in place of Board Chair Mark Overmyer-Velazquez and Tammy Exum, both who opted not to run again.

Looking to Election Day, the candidates all called for voters to support Democrats and help the party retain its six Council seats and three on the Board. Cantor said tough days are ahead, but the party is ready.

On the other side of the aisle, Republicans are optimistic about their chances to gain seats.

It has been 16 years since the Republican Party held a majority on the Town Council or Board of Education, but party stalwarts believe this just might be the year when they can do it again.

Town committee members gathered at Town Hall July 24 to nominate candidates for the Nov. 7 municipal election. Five people were placed on the slate for Town Council – the maximum allowed is six – and three will run for the Board of Education.

Minority leader Denise Berard Hall decided to step down after serving four terms. The two other incumbent Republicans, attorneys Christopher Barnes and Chris Williams, were nominated to serve additional terms.

Newcomers to the ballot are Mary Fay, a financial services senior executive; Ryan Langan, a business professional and the town committee treasurer; and Julie Krug, a senior risk manager by profession. All three are also involved in various volunteer commitments in the town and region.

The school board candidates are

incumbent Jay Sarzen; Robert Levine, a small business owner who ran for the 18th Assembly District legislative seat this past year; and Mark Walker, a senior banking executive. Their resumes also contain volunteer credits.

This is a more diverse ticket than in the past, including one person who is in a same-gender marriage and an African American. Both are believed to be firsts for the local GOP.

Arcadia Crossing developer 'taking a step back'

A planned project once touted as a transformative one for the Park Road neighborhood and the town's neighbors over the Hartford line will not at this time come to fruition.

The plan to redevelop the Sisters of Saint Joseph property on Park Road into a 310-unit apartment building called Arcadia Crossing was met with support from the neighborhood and Park Road business community when it was approved in early 2016.

As part of the plan, the sisters consolidated their living into the west wing of the existing building, which now includes 36 residential units, a kitchen, dining facilities, common rooms, a chapel, communal gardens and service facilities, all of which the sisters would always have continued to own.

Director of Community Services Mark McGovern confirmed that interior work for that area had been done and the sisters relocated, but the contract between the Sisters of Saint Joseph Corporation and the developer, Center Development Corporation, has now been terminated and the sisters are looking for a new interested party.

"Given that our proposal calls for preserving the historic Sisters of St. Joseph facility, we applied for historic tax credits from the state of Connecticut's Historic Preservation Office," said John Scobie of Center Development. "Unfortunately, we have met with resistance from the SHPO and have decided to take a step back to explore additional options."

Kim Mowers, a representative of the sisters who organized the sale of the site to CDC, said because the developer elected not to conclude the contract on the terms set forth in it, he is in the process of initiating a discovery for interested parties.

The project was meant to protect the historic integrity of the property, where a building was first constructed by the sisters in 1898, and preserve 75 percent of the site as open space.

The price tag was \$100 million, and the final development was estimated to generate \$1 million in property tax revenue.

Any developer interested in the parcel could build exactly what was approved without any addition review necessary, Town Planner Todd Dumais said, but even a minor change would need to go through an amendment process.

New pool management

The new general manager of Cornerstone Aquatics Center believes the facility should be, above all else, a welcoming place.

Michael Kerrigan is the head of the leadership team for Cornerstone, which has been under new management since July 1. Nicholas Daddabbo is the aquatics manager and Jill Hiriak is the customer service manager for the facility.

Kerrigan spent the last more than 25 years with the YMCA of Greater Hartford in all different areas, including aquatics, childcare, camping, membership and wellness. He most recently served as executive director of the YMCA in East Hartford and as the aquatics director for five Greater Hartford YMCA locations.

As a lifelong West Hartford resident, when the position of general manager at Cornerstone became available, he couldn't pass up the chance to work in a job that would directly benefit his community.

Kerrigan came up through the West Hartford school system, met his wife while attending Hall High School, and his three children now attend Morley, Bristow and Hall.

Space at Cornerstone has been underutilized for children and family programming, he believes, and he is looking forward to diversifying those and all offerings.

"When you come into Cornerstone, it's most important that you feel welcome," Kerrigan said. "Being a resident, I've brought my kids to swimming lessons here and I think having a staff that's welcoming and having that community feeling the second you walk in, knowing that this is your facility, [is what members need.]"

Cornerstone is located at 55 Buena Vista Road. The new phone number is 860-561-8270. Visit www.cornerstoneaquatics.org, to verify membership. **WHL**

-Mark Jahne contributed to this article

-For this and more breaking news, see our weekly, sister publication The West Hartford Press

Boulevard-Raymond Road Historic District

Designation preserves town's first major residential subdivision

by Lynn Woike
Editor

Greg Andrews and Virginia Grudzien were instrumental in the formation of the Boulevard-Raymond Road Historic District – action they took when their neighborhood was threatened with commercial development. The 56 homes on Boulevard between South Main Street and Trout Brook, and Raymond Road between Burr Street and Meadowbrook Road forms a horizontal T that became West Hartford's second designated historic district.

Development of that area was the vision of Frederick Rockwell, who represented West Hartford in the Connecticut General Assembly from 1893-94.

"His master plan was the development of a modern boulevard from Unionville to Hartford, complete with electric lights and trolley system," said Jeff Murray, research assistant at the Noah Webster House and West Hartford Historical Society.

"Frederick Rockwell is an interesting and ambitious example of how to over-extend real estate and land expansion," Murray said, noting, "Rockwell himself did, in fact, live on the Boulevard; however, he lived at the corner of Prospect Avenue, which is not where he focused for the development, as he was more interested in the west end, rather than the Hartford line."

Among the patchwork of properties he acquired in 1895 and 1896 was the King estate and former dairy farm near South Main Street and the Seymour estate near South Quaker Lane.

"The first step was the easiest – several tens of building lots were sold to individual owners who could do with the land what they wished.

These lots were located on the Boulevard; on Raymond Road; and on Meadowbrook Road (then called Vera Street, named after his daughter)," Murray said.

Andrews also noted that Rockwell named Raymond Road after one of his sons, and Jessiman Street was named for his other daughter.

When the town built Center School on the corner of Raymond Road and the current Memorial Road (known back then as Seyms Street) in June 1896 – just two months prior to Rockwell selling off the lots – buyers preferred lots on Raymond Road rather than Boulevard to be closer to the school, he said.

The biggest obstruction to Rockwell's plan, however, was that Hartford Street Railway Company protested strongly against his proposed Boulevard trolley line. Every month he pushed for it, and every month he lost more money, Murray said.

"His original intentions are clear because he created a central island of trees and grass [between South Main Street and Raymond Road] that could accommodate trolley tracks," Andrews said. "His plans were thwarted by others who were able to gain approval for a trolley

Virginia Grudzie and Greg Andrews were instrumental in designating 56 houses on Boulevard and Raymond Road a historic district in 1985.



This house on Boulevard is an example of a bungalow.



This house is older than its neighbors. It was built about 1885 at 46 South Main Street and moved to its present location in 1923 when the town was clearing land to build a high school.

Photos by Lynn Woike



This is an example of one of the Dutch Colonial homes in the district.



This house is a Colonial Revival with Dutch Colonial and Tudor Revival influences. A pair of chairs encourages relaxing conversations.

line to Farmington and Unionville that would run along Farmington Avenue.”

Many of the houses were built on Raymond Road between 1896 and 1900 by independent contractors, with four more built in 1908 after a fire.

“By 1912, Rockwell sold his own home on Prospect Avenue and moved to Hartford. But the Boulevard experienced something of a resurgence based on two key

factors: his wife, Jennie Rockwell, became quite prominent in the real estate business, selling off lots to people on the Boulevard east of Raymond Road across Trout Brook; and the opening of the Lanman Park tract by a separate real estate company, west of South Main Street in 1914. These two factors brought more people to the inner section of the Boulevard and contributed to heavy building from 1916 onward,” Murray said.



Photos by Lynn Wolke

Bethany Carrier and John McIlhoney stand in front of their American Foursquare home on Boulevard.

“Most of the homes on the Boulevard were therefore built between that date and around 1940. But by this point, Frederick

Rockwell had moved on from the project,” he said.

In 1915, when the high school – now the town hall – was built on

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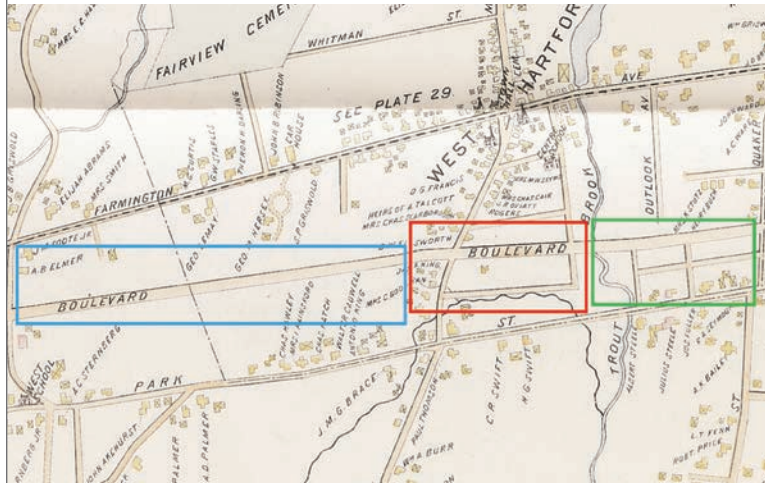
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This Colonial Revival is one of the most imposing on the block. It has an elegant arched front entrance porch, capped by a pediment and supported by molded pillars. When Virginia Grudzien lived here, the shutters were black and the door was burgundy.



This map is from 1896. The red square is the Boulevard section Frederick Rockwell put most of his time into. The blue square is the Lanman Park tract that opened in 1914. The green square is the part of the Boulevard Jennie Rockwell focused on.

Photo courtesy of the Noah Webster House and West Hartford Historical Society

South Main Street, Andrews said, “some of the homes on South Main Street were moved onto the Boulevard, both within the historic district and west of South Main Street, outside the historic district.”

The island down the middle of the street was never extended past Raymond Road until about 1980 when the town added an island between Raymond Road and Trout Brook Drive to complement what already existed, Andrews said.

Andrews, who has a professional background in law and architectural history, bought his house at 1643 Boulevard in 1981, living there until 2013.

“I bought it because it’s a lovely example of an early 20th century American Foursquare house, and I was very impressed by the surrounding homes on the block of the Boulevard,” Andrews said.

His background led him to appreciate the mix of architectural styles in the neighborhood and he began to research the area.

“I learned that the first developments occurred on Raymond Road and the west end of the Boulevard near South Main Street around 1885

and 1890,” Andrews said, noting that the last house was constructed in 1935.

While other development occurred east of Trout Brook Drive, there was nothing close to the scale planned for Boulevard. The construction of homes occurred during a relatively short timespan resulted in a similarity and architectural cohesiveness, he said.

The 56 homes in the district primarily reflect the Queen Anne, Colonial Revival and Bungalow styles. In some case these styles are mixed with other influences such a Dutch, Tudor and American Foursquare, presenting a portrait of the early 20th century architectural landscape in West Hartford.

“When I moved into the neighborhood, I was aware that there was a very strong sense of neighborhood even though we had an island down the middle of the street. Families who lived there, and I think even the families today, continue to have a strong sense of neighborhood identity,” Andrews said.

A few years after he moved in, the neighborhood was threatened.

“Owners of property along South Main Street were buying houses on

the north side of the Boulevard east of South Main Street and we knew their intention was to demolish them ... for commercial development,” Andrews said.

He and his neighbors were upset and concerned about what that would do to their neighborhood, and

“their desire to protect it in a very definitive way” led to it becoming a designated local historic district.

“It was a way to save it [from commercial development],” he said.

Like Andrews, his neighbor and friend across the island, Grudzien, felt strongly that the existing neighborhood needed to be protected. The two were willing to do the research, inventory each house and complete the documentation needed for a historic designation. They were guided by the Connecticut Historical Commission. It took months.

The pair educated homeowners about the benefits of preserving the neighborhood as well as the restrictions it would impose – primarily restricting exterior architectural changes visible from the street except



Photos by Lynn Wolke

This Queen Anne house on Raymond Road was built around 1897 and was recently restored.



This Dutch Colonial Revival has the classic benches in the entryway. Rosanne Haggerty lived here before becoming internationally recognized for developing innovative strategies to end homelessness. (See her story on page 14.)

for ordinary maintenance and repair.

Their neighbors supported the idea, as did the town when the petition was presented in 1985.

“Members of the town council were very supportive and they saw the value to the town of stabilizing the expansion of the town center so that it would not intrude on viable neighborhoods,” Andrews said.

“We just thought the homes were so unique and the neighborhood was just so interesting with the different type houses that we decided to apply for a historic district,” Grudzien said, adding that it was Andrews’ idea and he took the lead.

The plaques hanging on each home were designed by Linda Howey who submitted a variety of designs to the committee.

Grudzien recalled that they held



Photos by Lynn Wolke

"This is the house that started it all," Greg Andrews said of the westernmost house on the north end of Boulevard east of South Main Street. The threat of it becoming commercial property prompted the formation of the historic district to protect the neighborhood.

a house tour to kick off the historic district designation. About six homes were open to the public.

"It was very, very successful and it went very, very well. We were very happy with the results," she said.

Andrews recalled that in the mid-to-late-1990s several property owners petitioned to remove Raymond Road from the district.

"They were upset at decisions by the Historic District Commission that they considered arbitrary and too strict, and by a process they considered too time-consuming. In response, the commission revised the district regulations to streamline their decision-making process and timing, and to allow more administrative approvals by the town building department of alterations that previously required commission approval," he said.

After a public hearing attended by a large number of property owners lobbying for both sides of the issue, the council voted to maintain the district intact as is, he said.

"Soon after we created the historic district, several of us initiated

the idea that in celebration of Christmas, we should have luminarias – candles in bakery bags – lining both streets of the historic district, followed by a neighborhood celebration of Christmas," Andrews said.

Each year, the Sunday before Christmas, residents still put out luminarias and gather to celebrate the district and the season.

Paige Kenausis and her husband, Michael Barlow, coordinate the annual event. He solicits donations to buy the candles and enlists volunteers to help set up the luminarias while she charms someone into hosting the holiday open house.

"It's a potluck. ... We get a pretty big and intense turnout," she said.

She got John McIlhoney to host it the year he moved into his home. At the party, he said, a retired gentleman came up to him and asked if he had any remodeling plans. When McIlhoney said no, the man replied, "Good." Turns out it was a former owner of the house who had moved away and then returned to buy a house a few doors down.

There is also a summer block



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party. When their children started school, Kenausis and Barlow began hosting them.

"We had such a good time, we started doing it every year," she said.

These summer parties draw 60-70 people and have sometimes ended at midnight.

Last fall, McIlhoney and his wife, Bethany Carrier, organized a progressive dinner party, hosting the entree course. Fifteen couples from the neighborhood attended. It was so successful they plan to do another one this fall.

During the rest of the year, neighbors often hang out. Sometimes the invitation comes in the form of a text: "Beers on the deck?"

"It's a neighborhood where people really do look out for each other without being intrusive," Kenausis said. "People say hello. Almost everyone knows everyone on the street. People know what's going on ... and look out for each other's kids."

While the street has a reputation for being a busy thoroughfare, she said she finds it as neighborly as any cul-de-sac community might be.

Mitch Lewis, who is a member

of the town's Historic District Commission, lives on Boulevard.

"I'd characterize the district as a community," he said. "We have both winter and summer block parties where all are welcome and most attend."

"There was a strong sense of neighborhood there," said Grudzien who lived in a six-bedroom three-story Queen Ann on Boulevard from 1971-92.

It still is.

As Grudzien and Andrews walked along Boulevard, neighbors stopped their gardening to come over, catch up and reminisce. People out walking interacted with those they passed, and made plans to get together. **WHL**



Photos by Lynn Moike

Considered by some to be the largest and grandest house in the historic district, this post-Queen Anne style house has a roof and detailing that are in the style of Colonial Revival.

This stucco house is in the Tutor Revival style.



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Hydroponics in Haiti

Student develops nonprofit to help farmers

by Alicia B. Smith
Associate Editor

Looking around it was hard to believe that the 7.0 magnitude earthquake that struck Haiti in 2010 had not ravished the City of Pignon. The destruction and poverty here was everyday life for residents.

The poverty was overwhelming, however, one student is doing what he can to alleviate some of it, one farmer at a time.

Christian Heiden, a 2017 graduate of Northwest Catholic High School, has created a nonprofit organization that builds hydroponic systems to grow crops and offers farmers a way to make a living when traditional farming methods are limited due to conditions such as drought.

Heiden's vision began with his Boy Scout Eagle Service Project. After much research on hydroponic farming, his plan was to build a hydroponic greenhouse in Haiti. The Boy Scouts of America rejected his proposal. Heiden was not going to let such a glitch deter him. Instead he built the greenhouse on the campus of his school and was awarded the Scouts top honor last year.

Heiden was not finished, however.

No longer bound by the Eagle Scout project, he found a way to make his original vision a reality.

Last year Heiden visited Haiti with his older brother and their dad, Bill, bringing the hydroponic system he had designed. This past summer several of his friends from Northwest Catholic joined him on a second trip where they constructed eight smaller systems. Among those who traveled with him were his younger brother Jonathan Heiden, Joshua Vallera and Brian Waterston.

Since the first trip Heiden has redesigned his hydroponic system to operate with a hand pump and therefore not require a power source.

"When it came to my Eagle Scout project I wanted to do something big," said Heiden, a member of Troop 175 in Simsbury. "My Scoutmaster had a hydroponic greenhouse in his backyard."



All Courtesy Photos

The work attracted the attention of local children who stopped to see what all the fuss is about.

Heiden said he spent his junior year of high school learning more about the growing technique and learning how to construct a greenhouse to accommodate this method of growing crops.

"I taught myself what I had to know," he said.

"Hydroponics is a method of farming," Heiden explained. "[It] removes the soil from farms and uses nutrient-rich water run through pipes. It gives plants all the nutrients they need and they grow faster than traditional farming methods."

Heiden went on to say that hydroponics uses less water than traditional farming in soil and in places where drought is common, it can help farmers grow better-producing plants.

For years Heiden said he had always wanted to do something to help those in the developing world. After constructing the first hydroponic greenhouse in Haiti, Heiden said he learned how to maximize the function of the system.



Christian Heiden, founder of Levo International, talks with locals about his plans for hydroponic farming in the region.

"It's a lot of work but what does come out of it is impressive," he said of what the plants are able to produce.

This summer when Heiden and his friends returned to Haiti, they worked with the Iowa-based nonprofit Many Hands for Haiti. The organization has a compound in Pignon and works with residents there to support economic development and feeding programs.

"They are focused on develop-

ment work," Bill Heiden said. "They are looking to empower local residents to improve their conditions."

Heiden's project has the same goal.

The students were in Pignon from June 28 to July 7 and quickly found out how difficult it can be to work in the searing heat and humidity that is common there. They learned to work early in the morning and take a break during the hottest part of the day before returning to constructing



Christian Heiden, founder of the nonprofit Levo International, works on one of his first major projects, building hydroponic greenhouses in Haiti.

the greenhouses in the evening.

During breaks the boys would find themselves surrounded by children, all of whom loved to play soccer and would often persuade Waterston to play with them.

Waterston, who graduated with Heiden this year, was in charge of putting together the steel pipes that make up the frame of the greenhouse. Once the frames are in place, pipes are hung on them. Water runs through tubing inside the pipes. Plants are hung on the pipes with their roots inside the

water. A hand pump is used to move the water through the pipes, typically about four times a day.

Waterston was surprised by how difficult it was to dig into the ground to place the steel pipes because it was so rocky – something they hadn't experienced when building the prototype at home. At one point he was digging with a bucket and his hands before he was able to borrow a pick.

"In Haiti it is pretty much all rock. We used picks to hammer away at the soil, it took so much longer,"

"I think social justice is my drive to help build other communities. It evolved from my faith and my education."

—Christian Heiden

Waterston said.

Eventually the team hired a couple of locals to help dig, speeding up the process.

"Next summer we will bring a hand auger," Heiden said. "Me and Brian had some beat up hands at the end of the day. It was a character-building experience. I am discovering more and more this is not an 'I' project, it definitely is a 'we' project."

It was also a learning experience.

Heiden said that even as knowledgeable as he felt, he realized that there was still much to learn and feels he will be better prepared next year.

A local farmer was there to learn how to build and use the greenhouse, and the team worked with a translator. Heiden took French in school and tried to use some of it while in Haiti, however, Creole was a more common language. He was able to pick up a

little bit during his trip there.

The first crop harvested in Haiti from one of his hydroponic greenhouse was peppers while another farmer was able to grow tomatoes.

"We are currently trying to get them to expand to other crops," Heiden said.

He's had conference calls to get updates from people he worked with in Haiti.

Bill Heiden said some farmers plan to grow produce to feed their families while others plan to sell the crops and use the money to purchase things they need.

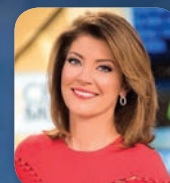
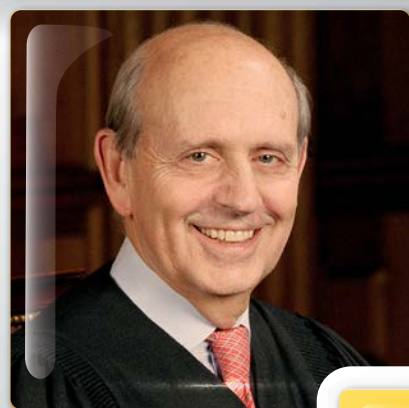
It was important for Heiden to not simply construct the greenhouses, but rather to create a model giving farmers a vested interest in the system. To that end Heiden is developing a micro-loan system. The greenhouses would be loaned to farmers for a

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couple hundred dollars and would be paid back through the sale of crops they grow using the system.

"It lets them value the system. It is theirs and they want it to be successful," Heiden said.

His nonprofit company is called Levo, International. The word levo means, "uplift" in Latin.

"We are not a charity organization but are focused on uplifting the community in the developing world," Heiden said.

He's hopeful his greenhouses can have a positive impact on farmers in Haiti. He is hopeful, because, he said, the Haitians he met are very hardworking.

Heiden has been selling his greenhouse system, called the Babylon, to people in this country to raise money for materials and supplies to build more in Haiti next year.

Heiden will be attending St. John's University in New York where he intends to study economics with a minor in social justice.

"I'm very excited to be in the St. John's program," he said. "Hopefully the education I will get at St. John's will let me grow the program in Haiti."

Waterston will be attending Marquette University, majoring in mechanical engineering while Vallera will be studying

marketing at the University of Connecticut and hopes to one day travel the world.

"I think social justice is my drive to help build other communities. It evolved from my faith and my education," Heiden said. "The environment I was in made me focus on what was important."

Heiden said he learned, too, that social justice work is something that can be most successful through the work of a team.

"Anything I learned I was relying on other people to help; it's not only important but absolutely necessary," he said.

Waterston said he would be willing to go back to Haiti again, noting that he had a fun time while there.

"The work was tough but I was overwhelmed with helping others," Vallera said.

As for the greenhouse that started all of this – the one Heiden built at Northwest Catholic High School – his effort was not for nothing. The structure will be used to grow produce and will be part of the curriculum of an earth science class. It will be maintained by the school's garden club; Heiden will teach members how to grow produce using hydroponics. Produce grown in the greenhouse will be donated to Hands on Hartford. **WHL**

For more information on Levo International, visit levointernational.org.



Local men in Pignon helped to get the greenhouses up and running.

Courtesy Photos



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Writer's block

Treasured tomato

by **Lynn Woike**
Editor

In 1927, the woman who would become my grandmother married a man in Sicily because she felt sorry for his four children back in Connecticut who didn't have a mother. At age 18, not speaking or reading English, she traveled by boat to America. My mother was her first child.

Among the limited possessions my grandmother brought with her were seeds from a plum tomato grown in her parents' garden that made great sauce. Every year she'd start the seeds in the greenhouse that had an old wood stove. The last chill of winter could be outside, but the greenhouse was toasty warm, dry and bright. There were metal watering cans and stacks of clay pots and semi-faded seed envelopes with the bottoms torn off, propped on sticks to mark the different vegetables. In May she'd plant them in the big garden, and before summer's end, she'd take the seeds from the best fruits and dry them for the following year's crop.

This went on year after year, decade after decade. She'd select the tomatoes with the most meat and save their seeds.

Some of her children and some of their children continue to do the same. I get emotional knowing I am one from the third generation growing these heirloom seeds in America. One of my cousin's sons extends it to a fourth generation.

My kitchen window is the closest thing I have to a greenhouse. This spring I again watched the saved seeds struggle to push through the thin layer of dirt, growing spindly, trying to get as much sun as possible. When it was time to plant them in my garden, they

were smaller and scrawnier than the varieties purchased from the nursery. It took two months for them to catch up, but my three plants are producing a lot of tomatoes.

The fruits are oblong, thick-walled and firm, with low water content and few seeds – like other Roma or paste tomatoes. But I can't help feeling that gram's tomatoes are special. The sauce I make from them tastes better than the sauce I make from the plum tomatoes I buy at the farm stand.

Gram would cook down pails of tomatoes in huge pots, making a simple marinara sauce that got put on pasta, lasagna and pizza. She canned sauce, tomatoes and tomato juice. She'd dry them on screens set in a car in the sun with its windows closed, then pack them in olive oil. She even picked green tomatoes.

I remember holding the pail for her in the garden and her pulling a shaker from her apron pocket, and biting into a tomato, salting it before she ate the rest while it was still warm from the sun. In the fall, she would pick anything left on the vine rather than risk them freezing in the first frost, and bring them into the greenhouse to ripen.

My grandmother also grew cosmos and daisies, and



Photo by Barbara Woike



Photo by Gloria Augeri



Photo by Lynn Woike

because I love them, I grow them, too. Like her, I grow basil, thyme, oregano, zucchini and, if the rabbits let me, beans.

I've viewed gardening as both a political and a spiritual undertaking. It's political because it decreases my participation in the corporate food chain. It's a tiny protest against an industry that is polluting our planet while feeding us genetically modified organisms. It's spiritual because it connects me to the Great Mother with a deep reverence as seeds grow with the soil, the sun and the seasons.

These tomatoes also make it an ancestral undertaking, as generations before me have grown this tomato. As we have descended from Maria Augeri, so have our tomatoes descended from hers. **WHL**

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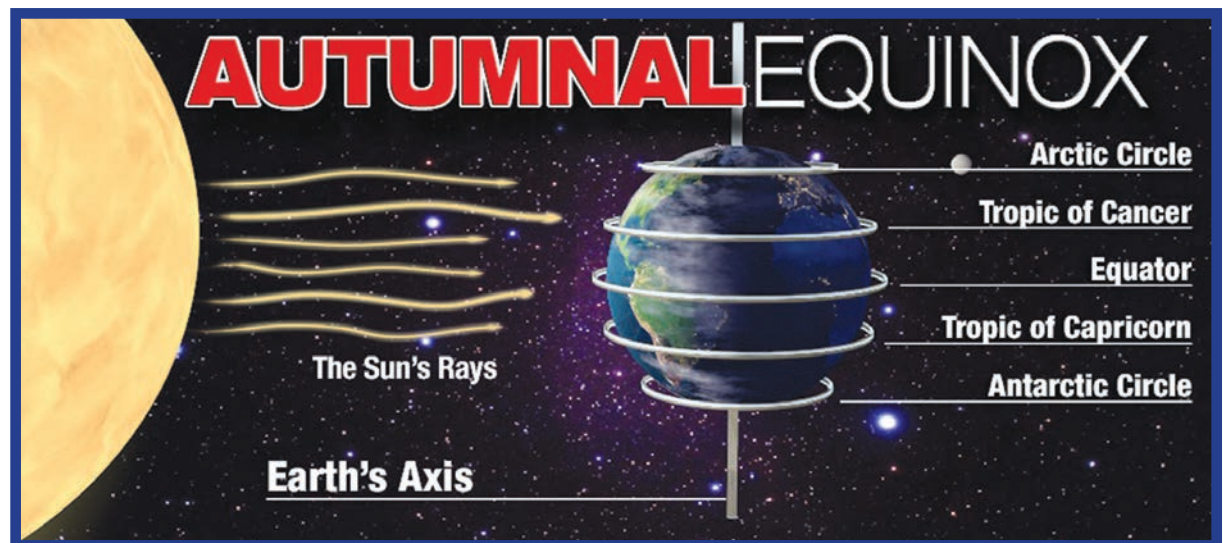
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BY MARK DIXON
WFSB METEOROLOGIST [AMS]



Goodbye summer, hello autumn!

This month we transition from Summer to Fall. Tough for those of you who may enjoy heat and humidity, but a welcome change for those who like cooler, shorter days. The Autumnal Equinox occurs this year on the 22nd of this month, at 4:02 p.m.

Now the term "equinox" is Latin, referring to the days of the year when there is nearly equal day and equal night – when the Earth's axis is not tilting in either direction toward or away from the Sun (also occurring in March with the transition from winter to spring).

However, the exact timing is more of an approximate - on the

22nd we will actually have 12 hours and 10 minutes of possible daylight (sunrise 6:38 a.m., sunset 6:48 p.m.). Also, it is important to point out, with regard to sunrise/set, these times are relative to when the upper edge of the Sun crosses the horizon (not the center).

To go more in-depth, the equinox occurs when the Sun

crosses the celestial equator, from north to south – when the Sun is at the halfway point, between summer and winter. Of course, this is relevant only to the Northern Hemisphere. In the Southern Hemisphere, it would be the opposite; meaning, those south of the equator will be saying goodbye to winter and hello to spring. **WHL**

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